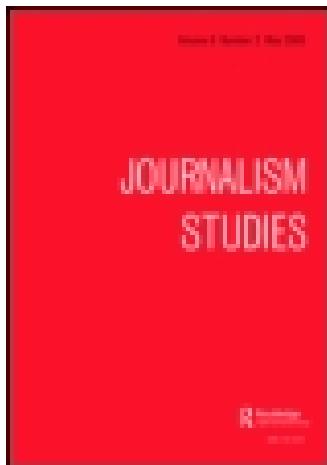


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Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Journalism Studies

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rjos20>

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Published online: 28 Jun 2010.

To cite this article: Burton St. John III (2010) A VIEW THAT'S FIT TO PRINT, Journalism Studies, 11:3, 377-392, DOI: [10.1080/14616700903290585](https://doi.org/10.1080/14616700903290585)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14616700903290585>

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A VIEW THAT'S FIT TO PRINT

The National Association of Manufacturers' free enterprise rhetoric as integration propaganda in *The New York Times*, 1937–1939

Burton St. John III

This study examines the appearance of National Association of Manufacturers' (NAM) propaganda, from 1937 to 1939, in articles within The New York Times. NAM's ability to place such rhetoric in The New York Times reveals both the presence of integration propaganda and the beginning of a press acclimation to propaganda as news. This examination reveals a crystallizing of professional journalism's reliance on authoritative, yet propagandistic sources, a dynamic that persists to this day.

KEYWORDS free enterprise; Jacques Ellul; professionalism; propaganda; public relations; sourcing

Introduction

Barely four years after the 1929 crash on Wall Street, National Association of Manufacturers' (NAM) president Robert Lund wrote in an internal memo "the public does not understand industry, largely because industry itself has made no real effort to tell its story." Instead, he said, business was cowed by criticism from reformers, labor leaders and an activist government in the form of the Roosevelt administration.¹ Consequently, industry failed to emphasize how it helped build what was, even in the Depression era, a high standard of living for most of the country. NAM must have a more efficient PR operation, he said (Tedlow, 1979, p. 62).

Lund's memo provides a provocative window into the world of industry during the 1930s. It revealed that there were still corporate leaders who believed that business had the leading role in promoting economic and social order. However, this was a view that ran against the grain of significant events. The economic collapse had called into question the authority of business—consumer groups critiqued industry practices, social reform movements criticized capitalism and the New Deal emphasized that government should protect and restore citizens' economic security against the whims of the marketplace (Bird, 1966; Ewen, 1996; Wall, 2008). Industry needed to work together, said Lund, to refute anti-business sentiments by partnering under a banner that extolled free enterprise as the best guiding force for meeting the country's economic difficulties (Ewen, 1996, pp. 301–2).

From 1937 through 1939, before the rise of NAM's defense preparedness rhetoric in 1940, it escalated a campaign in support of private enterprise, one of the most extensive domestic propaganda efforts in the United States since the Committee on Public

Information's (CPI) selling of World War I twenty years before. NAM conveyed pro-industry rhetoric through speakers' bureaus, movies and radio shows. They flooded newspapers with propaganda designed to demonstrate graphically to the public that the free enterprise system needed to be cherished as integral to the American way of life. This study examines the appearance of NAM propaganda rhetoric from 1937 to 1939 in news articles within *The New York Times*, a paper that had already built a growing reputation as the country's most-respected source of accurate and objective news reporting (Flamiano, 1998; Klein, 2001; Schudson, 1978). Specifically, NAM successfully placed in the *Times* three messages: (1) an activist government is dangerous, (2) industry is best-suited to lead Americans for the common good and (3) free enterprise and democracy works symbiotically toward the benefit of all.

NAM's ability to place such rhetoric in the *Times* has profound implications. First it reveals how NAM used integration propaganda to try to restore and bind Americans to the pre-Depression ideal of the supremacy of the markets. Second, it demonstrates that NAM successfully advanced the credibility of propaganda sources as authoritative contacts for news. In essence, NAM's efforts shed light on a shift within the press about propaganda. After World War I, the press voiced cynicism about the manipulations of the CPI; it developed both vigilance and professional standards designed to safeguard newsrooms against being exploited by professional persuaders (Lee, 1947; Schudson, 1978). Alfred McClung Lee noted that "the anti-press-agent moves of the publishers became more decisive during the 1929 depression and particularly from 1935 than ever before" (1947, p. 471). However, this study finds that, by examining *The New York Times* from 1937 until the end of 1939, journalism was actually moving from wariness of propaganda toward acclimation. The information, data and commentary provided by propagandists increasingly became views that were fit to print as news—a dynamic that persists to this day. Accordingly, since the days of NAM's campaign, American society has become steeped in integration propaganda, often embedded within news stories.

The National Association of Manufacturers and Integration Propaganda

Considering NAM's long-established place within the American corporate sphere, scholarly analysis of the association and its use of propaganda is notably sparse. Established in January 1895, it narrowly focused on the interests of business, often openly scornful and dismissive of public matters and any attempts by government to provide social welfare programs (Ewen, 1996, p. 300). In fact, before the Depression, NAM was primarily concerned with stamping out unionism and operated as the "leading exponent of public relations as an engine of anti-union and anti-government propaganda" (Tedlow, 1979, p. 59).

The advent of the Depression brought increased union activity, the consumer movement, increasingly vocal social reform advocates and the Roosevelt Administration's active approach to addressing the nation's economic challenges. Industry was concerned, said Stuart Ewen, that "the long term balance of power seemed to be shifting" (1996, p. 292). In December 1933, just nine months after Roosevelt took office, NAM president Robert Lund said that business needed to adjust its thinking about the public:

Industry must educate public opinion . . . [Any] cause must have public opinion behind it to succeed . . . Industry for years has stood satisfied in its own power and has totally failed in seeking the favor of public opinion. We have nothing to gain by being

inarticulate . . . We must come back to the fundamental fact that unless we reach the people, others will, and the prejudice they create is more than likely to be injurious. (Lund, 1933, pp. 75–6)

Four years after Lund's speech, NAM began to intensify an effort to educate the public about the benefits of American free enterprise. Although NAM never attached one name to this propaganda campaign, scholars have labeled it as an initiative to sell Americans on "the American Way" (Tedlow, 1979; Wall, 2008). The association said that citizens needed to know the American Way was a seamless co-mingling of both personal and public interests that worked together for the good of all. Americans had basic civil rights like freedom of expression and religion that one could act upon both publicly and privately. American free enterprise is a similar virtue, said NAM, as citizens also had a right to act both publicly and privately within a free market, whether as an owner, investor, worker or consumer. In essence, NAM worked to rehabilitate the power, influence and prestige of industry by equating the right to enter the free enterprise system with other essential individual rights that Americans saw as constitutive of a healthy society.

NAM's organized effort to influence the public to embrace the positive attributes of free enterprise reflects the hallmarks of a propaganda campaign. The term "propaganda" stands for an initiative that features systematically-constructed messages (whether appearing in news, books, movie houses or in speeches) designed to move mass audiences toward acceptance of attitudes, predispositions and behaviors that will benefit a privileged group (Combs and Nimmo, 1993; Cunningham, 2002; Sproule, 1997).

In particular, NAM's approach used a persuasive strategy known as integration propaganda, later described by Jacques Ellul as:

A propaganda of conformity. It is related to the fact . . . that in Western society it is no longer sufficient to obtain a transitory political act (such as a vote); one needs total adherence to a society's truths and behavioral patterns. As the more perfectly uniform the society . . . each member should be only an organic and functional fragment of it, perfectly adapted and integrated. (1965, pp. 74–5)

In the early to mid-1930s, with the rise of government activism, unionism and social reform sentiment, NAM grew concerned that American society was not conformed to the idea that free enterprise was a primary virtue. Particularly, since Lund's 1933 speech, the association had identified that the country lacked a total adherence to the truth that, as one of their PR plan memos stated, "free enterprise is as much an indivisible part of democracy and the source of as many blessings and benefits as are our other freedoms of speech, press and religion" (NAM, 1937a, p. 2). However, by 1937, with the rise of fascism in Europe and the Far East, Americans were, said the memo, more willing to count their blessings and also seek out reassuring "facts about our democracy, our system of free enterprise and private initiative" (NAM, 1937a, p. 2). As Ellul noted, integration propaganda is more apt to be viable when the masses are "cultivated, comfortable and informed" (1965, p. 76). Clearly, NAM, by 1937, believed that Americans were, even in the midst of the great Depression, sanguine about the sense of rights and privileges that still existed in American democracy, especially in contrast to the turmoil in the international scene. The association held that now was the time to emphasize, through integration propaganda, an inseparability of democracy and capitalism that could carry free enterprise to unprecedented heights of "permanent understanding and good will" (NAM, 1937a, p. 3). Integration propaganda's emphasis was clear throughout: Americans needed to

understand that their personal liberties would be better preserved if they allowed business and free enterprise to resume preeminence in society.

A different 1937 public relations planning document stressed that obtaining such a level of public acceptance and support of free enterprise was simply a matter of getting industry to finally sell itself to the citizenry. The problem, said the document, is that the middle and lower income classes in the United States did not understand industrial facts. Additionally, the Roosevelt administration's distribution of fragmentary and misleading information about business could lead to an electorate that would continue to follow "false leaders who are seeking selfish ends" (NAM, 1937b, p. 2). The key, said the plan, was to make people aware of dangerous government intrusion and re-orient the public toward understanding that the free enterprise system has been unsurpassed in providing for the material well-being (e.g., payrolls, tax contributions, charitable giving, pension plans) of all classes. The public also needed to know, said the document, that businesses not only focus on products and services, but also perform their duties with a sense of responsibility to the common good, "to its employees, to the public and to the development by progress and evolution of a more stable economic system" (NAM, 1937b, p. 1). The plan finished with the assertion that industry could better show the link between individual liberties and free enterprise by educating and cooperating with others—even labor—to "fight the very strong tendencies seen at every hand in this country toward a more complete bureaucratic political control of our everyday lives" (NAM, 1937b, p. 9).

Getting this message across would not be an easy task however, as one consultant informed NAM members. Today's American is better informed, he said, and is

bound to be a tougher customer for any propagandist than was his father or grandfather. He must be given time to digest the new problems—economic, political and social—which have been dumped on him. They are too much for him at the moment, as they are for his leaders in all countries. (*The New York Times*, 1937e, p. 23)

This meant that NAM needed to pursue not only clear articulation of its concerns, but also exploiting multiple communication channels to penetrate the sea of distractions that beset Americans during the Depression era. So, beginning in 1937, the industry ramped up its messages about the beneficence of industry using movie reels, speakers' bureaus, workplace and retail posters, radio programming, billboards, store window displays and special events. It also concentrated on the press, going beyond the simple sending out of news releases. Weekly newspapers received pre-formatted (or mat) copy of NAM propaganda that featured business news, statistics and graphics—by 1938, about 5,500 "depended on this service regularly," said a NAM pamphlet (NAM, 1938, p. 2). Daily newspapers also subscribed to NAM materials like a series of columns written by "Six Star" economic specialists and a daily—often caustic—cartoon called "Uncle Abner." In fact, as NAM prepared to escalate its propaganda effort in 1937, it already had documented the extensive press receptivity to such materials the year before: the "Six Star" column and Uncle Abner reached a combined "322 papers daily with a circulation of more than 5 million," it said (NAM, 1936, p 1).

NAM's Free Enterprise Rhetoric in *The New York Times*, 1937–1939

By the mid-1930s NAM had clearly demonstrated that it was successful in getting both weekly and daily newspapers to run many of their materials. And, with the rise of

defense preparedness in 1940, NAM more overtly linked itself to the health and well-being of the country by touting how it stood ready to help meet production quotas and, implicitly, preserve and create jobs (*The New York Times*, 1940, p. 46). However, from 1937 to 1939, NAM was in a slightly different stage of public opinion molding. Pursuing integration propaganda necessitated a more subtle approach than their previous offerings of pro-business economic columns or cartoons that featured a crotchety uncle opining about the downsides of an activist government. Integration propaganda allowed it to bolster selected aspects of society's established values and inclinations and link them to NAM's interests. This study explored how well that approach could facilitate the appearance of NAM's rhetoric of free enterprise in a newspaper, especially within a major daily already seen as a leading source for credible, objective news. This review of *The New York Times* was accomplished by using databank searches of its pages from 1937 to 1939. Using the key word "National Association of Manufacturers," this study found 50 articles that clearly displayed NAM rhetoric over that three-year period. This inquiry used a discourse analysis approach, evaluating these pieces with a critical eye towards news framing—that is, the journalistic selection of certain facts, data and experts to construct a news account (Entman, 1993; Parisi, 1998). In particular, this study examined these stories to identify what NAM propaganda rhetoric appeared within the narrative structure of these stories. In total, these pieces revealed the association's assertion that free enterprise was fundamental to the well-being of the nation was, indeed, a view fit to print. The *Times* repeatedly offered news columns—some on the front page—that afforded NAM space to elucidate three points: an activist US government is bad for the country; industry knows how to lead the country for its common good, and free enterprise has a vital, symbiotic role with democracy.

Government Activism is Bad for the Country

Beginning in 1937, NAM successfully achieved space in the *Times* to point out the problems of an overactive Roosevelt Administration that, through the cooperation of Congress, passed too many laws restricting business in the name of the common good. NAM conceded that the government was using economic planning as an attempt to redress the past excesses of business. However, the association said the actual result was bureaucratic interference that stifled the marketplace's production and investment. Such continued government activism would be especially deleterious for citizens, as "the threat of new restrictive, experimental legislation [would] plunge the country into another period of doubt, uncertainty and confusion," impairing industry's ability to create jobs, it said (*The New York Times*, 1937b, p. 7).

With the arrival of that December's annual NAM convention, the association issued a platform that the *Times* printed in full in 1937. The platform went beyond voicing concerns about meddlesome government regulations and pointed out that heavy taxation, high federal deficits, state competition with private enterprise and intrusive labor laws all served as "stop signals" that impeded the country's progress. All citizens needed to work together to remove these stop signals, it said, so that the country could have renewed confidence in business' ability to produce more goods and, therefore, more jobs and a better life for all. Americans could be at liberty to reach such a higher standard of living only through industrial freedom, NAM said (*The New York Times*, 1937f, p. 23).

America's increasingly activist government, with its poorly thought out economic planning, did not understand how its activities created apprehension within the marketplace, said NAM. The major problem the country faced, said one NAM director, was the lack of confidence among business, consumers and investors due to "unsound, vacillating and inconsistent government policies" (Egan, 1938, p. 28). The New Deal, though it may be well-intentioned, said NAM, put shackles on Americans' ability to produce and consume their way out of tough economic times. NAM President Charles Hook said government needed to:

Remove these causes of fear and uncertainty and private savings will rush back into the channels of private, productive enterprise. Remove these obstacles and billions of dollars which are now idle and unproductive will flow into the creation of more jobs, bigger payrolls, increased purchasing power and national income to sustain the nation on a prosperous basis. Turn off the stop signals and give private enterprise the green light. (*The New York Times*, 1938c, p. 40)

The New Deal's efforts also revealed the inefficient use of government funds, said NAM. Government works projects and other subsidies did not stimulate a stronger economy because as federal activity escalated (e.g., additional regulations and increased taxation) it sent more "stop signals" to industry, it said. "Pouring public funds into pump-priming projects, no matter how freely, cannot provide permanent jobs and economic stability if private enterprise is not encouraged simultaneously to proceed and expand," it said (*The New York Times*, 1938b, p. 2). Instead, said NAM, government activism called for expensive federal spending, resulting in record taxes and a towering debt, while providing no remedy for the country's economic ills. "The past decade is a story of retarded industrial expansion, discouraged enterprise and widespread unemployment," said NAM. Meanwhile, it said, administration spending over the last two years exceeded the sum total of the nation's spending since the signing of the Constitution (*The New York Times*, 1939g, p. 18).

Finally, government activism threatened the liberties that Americans had come to cherish, said NAM. The association alluded to the increasing domestic awareness of totalitarianism in Europe and the Far East and warned how America's overactive government could similarly slip into dictatorial behaviors. Said NAM Vice President Henning Prentis:

If groups of men calling themselves government are really to plan our economic activity, they must of necessity dominate all individual thinking and action. The individual would exist for the State; not the State for the individual. Since government in such case would be planning, in its opinion at least, for the greatest good of the greatest number of citizens, it could brook no interference from any opinion-forming agency—whether school, press or church. (*The New York Times*, 1938e, p. 30)

To prevent state usurpation of individual liberties, Americans and industry should stand together in opposition to "fascism, communism or government collectivism in any of its forms," said NAM (*The New York Times*, 1937f, p. 23). In a front-page story, the *Times* revealed that the association's 1938 platform formalized this opposition to overweening statism. NAM said that "any program of dictated economy would be a reversal of the American experience and tradition." Americans understood that "political rights and religious freedom are inevitably bound up with the preservation of private enterprise and

economic opportunity," it said. What government did not understand, it said, is that the state's proper place in American society was to stay out of that personal sphere that allowed one to enjoy, and profit from, individual liberties. Government, said NAM, should not go "beyond measures to insure fair, free and open competition and to protect the public health" (*The New York Times*, 1938h, pp. 1, 22).

Business as Leading the Charge for the Common Good

In several *Times* stories, NAM successfully highlighted its argument that business, if freed of the shackles of government intrusion, could take its rightful leadership position and improve the common good. Lammot du Pont, president of E.I. du Pont and a NAM member, said that business had already established itself as the preeminent source of progress in society because it funded advances in science and education. It made perfect sense, he said, that "the bulk of responsibility for future social betterment should be placed on industry's shoulders." However, corporate leaders required assurances from government that the state's constant experiments with marketplace legislation would end, so that businessmen could press forward and help lead the country out of its economic doldrums, he said (*The New York Times*, 1937d, p. 23).

NAM said that business had a particularly difficult time working for the common good when the New Deal's implementation of new labor laws stirred up confrontation between owners and workingmen. In 1937, NAM president Colby Chester said that the quarrels between business and labor prevented both from cooperating to "increase the national purchasing power . . . and work above all for the public welfare." He said the country needed a greater understanding of the harmony of interests between labor and business. For example, he said, management understood that labor deserved better pay that was:

adequate for a man and his family to acquire the reasonable comforts of modern existence. Well, doesn't management approve of that? Of course it does . . . From management's essentially businesslike way of thinking, sales volume depends upon a nation of well-paid workers steadily employed and with wage scales sufficiently elastic to keep step with living costs . . . We merchandisers require a large number of customers who can comfortably afford to buy our goods, and this is why, in self-interest, we want the nation's payroll folk to be well paid and steadily paid. (*The New York Times*, 1937c, p. 33)

What government, labor and the public needed to understand, said NAM, was that industry, through its free enterprise orientation, inherently had the motivation, skill and capability to improve every American's lot. The association asserted this symbiosis between the business and the public: when industry produced more and garnered larger profits, Americans benefited through increased material wealth and job creation. Conversely, as the worker's ability to consume improved, so did private enterprise's viability and leadership role in society, it said. NAM president Chester said the key was moving toward better understanding of this harmony of interests. He maintained that "we'll all thrive and grow faster with the cooperation of labor enlightened by a consciousness of its responsibilities to itself and to the other equities dependent upon industry" (*The New York Times*, 1937a, p. 8). In the meantime, said NAM, the combination of disruptive workplace laws and related labor disputes harmed national prosperity; industrial unrest cost the United States approximately \$5 billion in 1937 (*The New York Times*, 1938d, p. 33).

Despite these concerns, NAM propaganda never veered too far from accentuating the positive. Several *Times* stories featured NAM assertions that America was beginning to increasingly appreciate the role of business leadership in furthering the country's common good. NAM said that two important conditions for reasserting business primacy were already in place—marked public dissatisfaction with the discord between industry and the state, and private enterprise's capacity to improve society. Chester, testifying before the Senate Commission on Unemployment, said "the public is pretty much fed up with the fact that government, business and labor can't get together." He continued:

Business is ready. We want to get going. We have no selfish objectives. The laboratories are bursting with new ideas. We are on the verge of the greatest forward movement this country ever saw. (Stark, 1938)

Within a few months, NAM affirmed that industry's message of cooperation for the common good was getting across. "We are beginning to merge into a community of sympathetic understanding," said Chester. "We are becoming a family again. The business man's philosophy of teamwork and common sense has taken root," he said. The country increasingly turned to corporations for counsel, he said, and the nation gradually embraced the message that "what is good for industry is good for America" (*The New York Times*, 1938i, p. 21). Former NAM president Robert Lund, who now served as chair of NAM's PR committee, observed that "the time is already coming when the people will turn their backs unerringly upon planned economy, or unwise social controls" and develop an enhanced appreciation for the leadership offered by business men (*The New York Times*, 1938g, p. 1). The country, said NAM, was poised to march toward an improved condition for all, because the resources of industry could cause progress to flow like a mighty Niagara. However, this could happen only if the nation cooperated with industry and allowed it to lead the country to better times, it said (*The New York Times*, 1938a, p. 40).

Free Enterprise Symbiotic with Democracy

Numerous *Times* stories featured NAM rhetoric that linked the positive attributes of American democracy to the benefits of free enterprise. In an address before the 1937 NAM convention, NAM President Colby Chester said that the brilliance of the free market was that it did more than simply build upon democratic freedoms; it also amplified the range of personal liberties and autonomy. This genius of free enterprise—its symbiosis with democratic freedoms—was clearly visible from both consumer and worker perspectives, he said. Consumers had the freedom to judge the viability of companies. Businesses succeeded or failed based on how well they satisfied customer needs. Thus, private enterprise gave sovereign power to the people and "it makes business and industry the true servants, not the masters, of the people" he said. Secondly, he said, each worker had:

one of the greatest fruits of democratic freedom in [that] a man is offered free individual opportunity under reasonable and profitable safeguards, to make his contribution, to do his job and to earn and reap the full measure of his reward. (*The New York Times*, 1937g, p. 23)

By 1939, NAM developed a metaphor for this link between democracy and private enterprise—the tripod of freedom, consisting of representative political democracy, free enterprise and religious liberty. The way NAM described it, this trinity was not an abstract

concept, but rather a crucial component of the American way of life that could be imperiled by "the lethargy of the citizens who have failed to grasp the significance of forces working against it." Specifically, government policies that increased uncertainty in the markets led to a bottling up of the flow of capital into new business ventures, it said. If the state does not stop inhibiting such investment, said NAM's Prentis, government would then say it had an excuse for stepping in and providing the capital itself. "Then, state socialism will be a fact," he said. "The free private enterprise system will collapse," he said, "the tripod of freedom will fall and along with it will go representative democracy and spiritual freedom in common ruin." The state would then attempt to conform all individuals to its point of view, and suppress all free expression, he said (*The New York Times*, 1939a, p. 38).

NAM was specific about the forces that worked against the tripod of freedom—bureaucracy, dependency and the rise of social and economic reforms propelled by anti-business perspectives. First, the overactive Roosevelt administration was leading the country into a "bureaucratic despotism which is demoralizing to the whole system of free enterprise," it said. Second, it said, too many citizens relied on the administration, revealing a dependency on work and relief programs that was becoming a habit. "Industry cannot stage recovery and pay taxes necessary for such dependency," said NAM president Howard Coonley, "I say [this] because such leaning on the State destroys the normal fiber of the people and must ultimately undermine their ability to defend their country" (*The New York Times*, 1939d, p. 82). Finally, the ascendancy of reformers and critics of industry was often a vehicle for those who sought to undermine the trinity, he said. "Vigilance is unquestionably called for if our society and our industrial system are not to be honeycombed by the hidden foe nourished on alien ideals that threaten the very foundation of our philosophy and welfare," he said (*The New York Times*, 1939d, p. 82).

NAM asserted this symbiosis of private enterprise and democracy at a propitious moment. By late 1939, the *Times* reported that NAM warned of the possible spread of totalitarianism beyond Europe and the Far East. Such a development could imperil the country's political, cultural and religious liberties, said NAM. Accordingly, the association, sometimes using combative language, touched upon concerns about the further domestic rise of anti-free enterprise "isms." NAM president Coonley emphasized that resisting alien ideologies with "our full moral, intellectual and even physical strength" was an even bigger priority than contemplating possible war. "We must organize to fight these ideologies," he said, "to give blow for blow, to utilize every means of expression to disprove their fallacies and to show the correctness of the American point of view" (*The New York Times*, 1939c, p. 12). NAM seamlessly linked the dangers of these foreign ideologies to its fears that the Roosevelt administration's activism could lead to an intrusive domestic government that would similarly threaten democracy and private enterprise. In December 1939, a front-page *Times* story highlighted NAM platform statements that urged the government to stop imperiling the tripod. The platform called upon the government to resist over-legislating the marketplace and applying heavy taxes in the name of social services that often proved to be wasteful or extravagant initiatives. Instead, the state should be the servant of the people, it said, and keep "intact our national trinity—representative political democracy, religious and social liberties and free enterprise—realizing that they are inseparable and with one lost, all are lost" (*The New York Times*, 1939e, pp. 1, 20).

The country needed more appreciation for the benefits of the tripod, Coonley said. America had achieved world leadership in material goods, the arts and education. With the tripod, the country had shown an inner stability as it struggled with doubts and economic turmoil over the last several years, stressors which led to revolutions in other countries, he said. Still, there were always detractors and the ill-informed, he said, who would impede the beneficial symbiosis between democracy and free enterprise. It was crucial for government, labor and the public to examine how business could provide "guidance when these concepts and principles are under fire" he said. With such cooperation, he said, the country could embrace the opportunity "to return to our original concepts of the democratic way of life" (*The New York Times*, 1939e, p. 20).

Implications

NAM's ability to place its rhetoric repeatedly within *The New York Times* during these years points to two provocative implications. First, NAM's ongoing effort to sell Americans on the need for renewed faith in business leadership provides insights into how propaganda became more sophisticated in an attempt to try to restore and bind Americans to the pre-Depression principle of the supremacy of the markets. Second, it points to a shift in post-World War I journalism away from wariness of propaganda toward an increasing proclivity for press use of information and rhetoric provided by PR sources, a dynamic that persists to this day.

First, this use of integration propaganda on a widespread scale in the United States is significant. As Ewen (1996) pointed out, NAM learned from the extensive tactical domestic propaganda approaches that were used 20 years earlier by the CPI to sell the public on World War I. They duplicated several of the CPI's methods, including constantly swamping the media with information, using multiple visual materials, establishing local community clubs and training spokespersons that could carry forth their pro-business messages. However, at a strategic level, NAM's thinking and approach was more sophisticated; it had to be, for it faced a far more complicated persuasive challenge than did the World War I American propagandists. The CPI, said its director George Creel, was a "plain publicity proposition" (1920, p. 4). It amplified what was already a prevalent attitude in the United States—that Germany had pursued aggressive conquest for selfish purposes and that the United States was engaged in a just effort to right a wrong. The CPI "simply took over a whole range of rehearsed responses and exploited them to the hilt", providing simplistic accounts of "the savior against the aggressor" (Buitenhuis, 1976, p. 142; Hollihan, 1984, p. 255).

In NAM's case, there was no prevalent attitude in business's favor. Instead, industry faced an activist government, hostile labor unions, a burgeoning consumer movement and a wide range of reformers and social activists, some within the press and political movements. To counter these developments it used integration propaganda to stress to Americans that free enterprise could help them re-assert some kind of control over their lives. This was an especially resonant message considering the persistent levels of unemployment, workplace strife and uncertainty about the possible penetration of international conflicts into the American public sphere.

Ellul's point that integration propaganda operates on both comfort and conformity is particularly relevant to NAM's American Way campaign. In the face of both domestic and international upheavals, NAM rhetoric about the primacy of business asked audiences to

(1) take comfort in the fact that industry has in common with each individual the desire to preserve the fruits that all receive from the American Way and (2) each person will have even more of those blessings—the trinity of democratic governance, civil liberties and a job-creating free enterprise—if each individual will but conform to the country's tradition of allowing business to take its rightful leadership role. There is some proof that this subtle reassuring appeal worked for many citizens. By the end of 1939, NAM released a nationwide survey that indicated 53 percent of Americans said that recovery would progress more rapidly if business was left alone to increase industrial production. Another question revealed that 60 percent of respondents indicated that government should be taking more advice from business (*The New York Times*, 1939f, p. 18). A separate 1939 NAM-commissioned survey revealed that the public believed manufacturers, industrialists and merchants had done the most to help improve the country's condition over the previous decade (*The New York Times*, 1939b, p. 3).

Scholars (Ewen, 1996; Marchand, 1999; Tedlow, 1979) have pointed out that, in the late 1930s, corporations inundated the public with a mixture of public relations and advertising messages that boldly asserted the beneficence of industry. However, NAM's American Way campaign revealed a more indirect approach toward persuading the public about the noble role of business. NAM appealed to the American ideal that each citizen had the opportunity to reach for the progress that should be his or her due. The campaign tapped into this aspect of the mythical American Dream and encouraged citizens to go forward through cooperation. At the same time, it also told the public that such progress could only be realized by bringing along a vital part of the past that contributed to the American heritage of progress—business leadership. Essentially, NAM appropriated the traditional American concept of progress through rugged individualism and tied it to the notion that also trusting in business paternalism was key to fully upholding American values and restoring the country's forward march. Although this appears paradoxical it is explained by NAM's ability to highlight the domestic government initiatives of the time and, through integration propaganda, shift the emphasis to benefit industry. The beleaguered public needed to realize that turning to the helpful hand of the government could ultimately separate the individual from his rights, said NAM. In contrast, it said, the guiding hand of business interests would insure individuals' liberties were always protected as a vital part of the tripod of freedom, because free enterprise was, in this triad, linked to personal freedom. Such an intricate development in audience persuasion was an evolution in domestic propaganda. It is both instructive and cautionary as to how the propagandist can appropriate what individuals see as crucial cultural values and convince them to bind themselves even closer to them. It is a process that attempts to reinforce a public's understanding that it is acting out of self-interest, while it is actually being subtly called to align itself to the concerns of a privileged interest—an interest whose agenda may not actually be in concert with large sectors of the public.

Second, NAM's ability to successfully place its rhetoric within the pages of the *Times* is indicative of a gradual acceptance of propaganda material as news. This is an important dynamic, as within the first 10 years after World War I, the mainstream press often voiced displeasure with how the CPI had sold journalists on that war. News workers for both newspapers and magazines became increasingly vocal about how journalists had been complicit and, by their unquestioning use of CPI information, had tainted the news with "large-scale lying" (Gary, 1999, p. 23; Irwin, 1936, p. 4). Increasingly, journalists and academics voiced concern that one of the more disconcerting domestic outcomes

of World War I was the emergence of a new PR industry that attempted to build on the manipulations of the CPI (Knowlton, 1997, p. 37; Lee, 1952, p. 23). Numerous journalism textbooks in the 1920s exhorted the press to stay away from using materials from propagandists, the American Newspaper Publisher Association escalated its attacks against propagandists in its Anti-Publicity Bulletins and, by the late 1930s there was evidence that newsrooms had established a vigilance against PR materials showing up regularly in the news (Lee, 1947).

However, as this study reveals, even *The New York Times*, a paper that already had a premier reputation for objectivity and accuracy, was inclined to repeatedly use NAM propaganda. After all, it was a well-established association full of representatives from high-profile companies and experts in economic forecasting, accounting and labor relations. Accordingly, the *Times* exhibited little compunction about quoting NAM officials at great length, printing verbatim NAM platforms and providing extensive coverage of the group's year-end conventions.

Indeed, what was happening at the *Times* was further evidence that, instead of a continuing resistance to propaganda after the war, the press was gradually accommodating space-seeking propagandists. By the late 1920s some observers had already documented that no less than half of the news content in the *Times* came from PR sources (Griese, 2001, p. 107; Schudson, 1978, p. 144). Over time, academics would further substantiate the press's willingness to use propaganda as news, as numerous studies of other news outlets revealed that anywhere from a third to more than two-thirds of content was traced directly back to PR sources (Cutlip, 1962; Lattimore et al., 2008; Martin and Singletary, 1981; VanSlyke Turk, 1986).

In this context, the successful penetration of NAM's propaganda materials into the news columns of the *Times* serves as a crucial signpost for the press's gradual acclimation to propaganda as a viable source for news. In large part, this occurred as an ironic and unintended by-product of press professionalization in the aftermath of news room use of propaganda during World War I. Journalism's increasing professionalization in the 1920s called for news workers to re-assert press credibility and authenticity by focusing on facts, data and context as provided by knowledgeable figures. NAM's campaign met that journalistic criteria perfectly; it provided the press with statistics, facts and commentary by informed experts. Through this approach, NAM offered not only news, but views that were fit to print. To this day, journalism continues to rely on sources, those who, through their command of information and commentary, brandish authoritativeness. This repeated preference for expert contacts has made journalism vulnerable to uncritical use of written and video news releases, reliance on supposedly-scientific medical reports that were shaped by writers in the employ of pharmaceutical companies, and a reliance on pundits who speak on behalf of undisclosed interests. In fact, David Barstow of *The New York Times* received a 2009 Pulitzer Prize for revealing how the expertise of propaganda had greatly shaped news framing in the ramp up to the Iraq War. Barstow reported on:

how some retired generals, working as radio and television analysts, had been co-opted by the Pentagon to make its case for the war in Iraq, and how many of them also had undisclosed ties to companies that benefited from policies they defended. (The Pulitzer Prizes, 2009)

Accordingly, the public and the press are left with the troubling probability that the informed perspectives that the news amplifies are too often the continued iterations

of the desires and wants of privileged groups. As NAM president Charles Hook remarked in 1938:

We find today an indication that the public is beginning to realize the problems of business and to sympathize with business. This may well be the beginning of a public demand for a change in attitude and more efficiency on the part of government. (*The New York Times*, 1938f, p. 43)

Of course, Hook's reference to a demand for government efficiency was actually the wishes of NAM, who represented industry. The *Times*, however, reported NAM's desire as news. Seventy years later, journalism has a documented track record for inadvertently translating privileged viewpoints into an ostensibly informed understanding of the world. Too often these privileged perspectives work to leverage American values to garner public conformity for a special interest. The public, therefore, lives in an era where integration propaganda is endemic within the public sphere, propagated by an amalgam of PR firms, marketing groups, political, social and religious organization and lobbyists. The integration propaganda they offer attempts to appropriate societal values about progress, prosperity, individualism and the greater good and use these concepts to further the well-being of those who have significant social and financial capital at stake. Professional journalism, too often acclimated to the data, facts and talking points offered by paid persuaders, tends to operate as a conduit for such propaganda. As long as professional journalism relies strongly on authoritative interests' constructions of reality, its claims of providing authentic and credible renditions of news will be shadowed by the persistent presence of systemic propaganda.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The NAM archives were made available through the assistance and cooperation of the Hagley Museum, Wilmington, DE.

NOTE

1. The term "activist government" for the purpose of this examination is rooted in Franklin Roosevelt's conception of economic security that, in his words, would require "the active interest of the Nation as a whole through government." The FDR administration saw this approach as acting in a collective interest (see Wall, 2008, pp. 36–7). NAM archival materials revealed that the association frequently used terms like "planned economy" and "collectivism" to attempt to link the New Deal's efforts to other socioeconomic systems like socialism, fascism and communism.

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